

Submission to the DFAT International Gender Equality Process

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OVERALL STATEMENT

Gender equality is achieved when people of all genders have equal rights and equal opportunity to participate across political, social and economic life.

Advancing gender equality begins by recognising that women, girls and people of diverse gender identities continue to experience widespread gender-based discrimination and violence. This is a product of the patriarchal systems that dominate global life. By challenging discriminatory cultures and practices, and enabling the participation and leadership of all genders, the Australian government can realise its commitment to gender equality and, in so doing, advance peace, security, prosperity and development in the region and beyond.

This submission recommends that gender equality principles be embedded across all aspects of Australia's foreign policy, including security, diplomacy, trade, humanitarian response and international development. This must be done coherently, consistently, and with equal and even commitment by all government actors and agencies.

To achieve this, DFAT and the Australian Government must develop its own capacity regarding gender equality issues. This includes understanding the causes, nature, and consequences of gender-based inequality, the ways it undermines Australia's values and policy goals, and the best practice approaches to addressing it. It further requires alignment between Australia's domestic and foreign policy commitments to gender equality.

WHAT ARE THE INTERNATIONAL GENDER EQUALITY PRIORITIES?

The international gender equality priorities are to:

1. Prevent **all forms of gender-based violence**.

Gender-based violence (particularly against women, girls and people of diverse genders) is enabled by, and entrenches, gender inequality. Gender-based violence includes physical, emotional, economic, social and political violence and occurs in the home, in public, in the workplace, and in educational institutions. It occurs in times of peace, prosperity and stability, but it is exacerbated by conflict, crisis, and instability. The new policy must recognise the complex gendered drivers of violence and commit to addressing root causes as the foundation of its gender equality policy.

2. Recognise **the negative gendered and intersectional impacts** that attend global life.

Gender inequality shapes individuals' experiences of global life in ways that can make them uniquely vulnerable to harm or, alternatively, place them in a privileged position. Astute gender analysis enables better understandings of the drivers, dynamics and outcomes of gender inequalities in all areas of global life, providing opportunities to address them. An intersectional approach to such gender analyses is critical to recognising and addressing the disproportionate impacts of gender inequality on especially vulnerable or marginalised groups, such as young, First Nations, migrant and other gender groups.

These include in contexts of:

- Peace, conflict, conflict prevention, political violence and peacebuilding
- Climate crisis and disaster response
- Humanitarian crisis, including forced migration
- Experiences of asylum and becoming a refugee
- Development and modernization programs
- The design and management of alliances and security arrangements

The new policy must draw from gender-responsive and evidence-based analysis. This must incorporate the voices of those experiencing these issues to understand the gendered harms inherent in them and to identify the priorities and opportunities to enhance gender equality.

3. Enhance the participation and leadership of women, young women, girls and people of diverse gender identities.

Gender equality requires access to resources, decision-making and cultures of legitimacy. This can be enhanced by ensuring the participation and leadership of all gender identities in areas where they have been historically absent or in informal spaces where their leadership has been discredited or dismissed. In many areas of public life, this requires a particular focus upon the leadership of women and diverse gender groups — both within Australia’s institutions and globally — particularly in concerns of:

- Peace, conflict and political violence
- Diplomacy and trade
- National security sectors and arrangements

4. Protecting and promoting human rights and civil liberties.

Gender equality is advanced within a broader culture of rights’ protection. This requires strengthening the laws, policies, criminal justice and other support mechanisms so that they can repel the unequal power distribution between women, men and people with diverse gender identities that currently drives gender inequality. Advocacy and monitoring of rights’ protection involves a commitment to:

- Ending all forms of discrimination in legal structures
- Ensuring women's livelihood and equal pay, recognition of both productive and reproductive work, including all forms of unpaid work
- Recognising and addressing the gendered and undervalued nature of care work
- Enhancing access to education from primary to tertiary, and vocational training
- Campaigning to end Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) and child labour
- Ensuring equal access to education
- Encouraging justice processes for gender-based crimes
- Taking full opportunity of Australia’s global diplomatic standing to condemn all human rights’ violations, including attacks upon the rights of women and girls and gender diverse communities.

WHAT ARE THE MOST EFFECTIVE APPROACHES FOR ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY GLOBALLY?

Globally, the most effective approaches for achieving gender equality include:

1. Advancing multisectoral gender inclusive and gender-responsive policy and practice.

This entails:

- Inclusive decision-making throughout the programme and policy-making cycle, from inception, to implementation and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL)
- Engaging in a gender analysis of every decision taken, and not taken, throughout the programme and policy-making cycle
- Meaningful engagement with all genders by moving beyond tokenism, removing structural and other barriers to engagement and influence, and creating enabling environments for the full and active participation of all genders in all decision-making

- Adopting gender-based budgeting and feminist financing
- Utilising quotas, targets and benchmarks
- Committing to robust, on-going and publicly accountable MEL frameworks
- Providing institutional guidance to raise awareness within the government of gender equality values and its centrality to Australia's global relations
- Establishing well-resourced and politically-supported gender positions, structures and policies within and across institutions, which do not inadvertently detract from the need to commit to efforts to advance gender equality that is incumbent upon everyone
- Adequately resourcing gender inclusive and responsive programmes and policies

2. Drawing from evidence-based approaches, including knowledge created and co-created by all gender groups. This involves:

- Ensuring that knowledge generation practices embed the voices of all genders in communities affected by the issue under consideration
- Supporting the collection of gender disaggregated data
- Supporting research and data collection on the gender dynamics and gendered impacts of core government policy (domestic and foreign)
- Supporting knowledge generation on norms and structures that drive patriarchal and discriminatory behaviours at community levels and how this knowledge can be incorporated in policy implementation
- Resourcing and utilising qualitative and culturally-relevant research that amplifies women's voices and local conceptualisations of challenges, priorities and responses

3. Adopting a localised approach to advancing gender equality by:

- Privileging the voices of community members and, especially, those most impacted by gendered violence and discrimination
- Empowering and recognising the knowledge, skills and capabilities of those who may be typically marginalised or ignored
- Strengthening and engaging with women's led civil society organisations (CSOs), as well as CSOs led by girls and people of diverse gender identities through resourcing
- Reviewing and strengthening governance and oversight structures to support women's leadership and participation, and provide mechanisms to better include girls and people of diverse gender identities and sexual orientation in policymaking and implementation, and social and economic activities
- Supporting intergenerational approaches to women's leadership and participation in economic activities
- Encouraging community engagement and mobilisation for improving gender equality outcomes
- Identifying and addressing barriers to leadership and participation for women and diverse gender identities, including the gendered and undervalued nature of unpaid care work

4. Implementing relevant global frameworks, including:

- UN Declaration of Human Rights
- Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development
- Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda
- Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda

- Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
- Global Compact for Migration

HOW CAN AUSTRALIA BEST SUPPORT EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY INTERNATIONALLY?

Two key approaches should be adopted to advance gender equality internationally:

1. **Australian policy should align with, and promote, relevant emerging and existing frameworks (as listed above) by:**
 - Engaging in a gender analysis prior to establishing and implementing international agreements, national and foreign policies responding to global challenges, and ensuring sustainable development for all
 - Adhering to gender equality requirements across all bilateral and multilateral partnerships
 - Integrating gender analysis and do no harm principles into all areas of foreign policy
 - Aligning the gender equality strategy with national policies, including the National Action Plan on ending Violence against Women and their Children and reconciliation plans
 - Investing in awareness raising and education for government personnel
2. **Australia should remain steadfastly committed to advancing women-led civil society, and women's leadership in political, economic and social justice sectors through:**
 - A commitment to the localisation of gender equality programming across all sectors
 - Including women's organisations in the implementation of programmes across all sectors
 - Long-term, sustained funding allocation for women's civil society
 - Flexible and predictable funding
 - Leading through example by supporting the promotion of and opportunities for women leaders within DFAT
 - Insisting upon the participation of women in all areas of bilateral and multilateral diplomacy

WHAT SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT/ DFAT CONSIDER WHEN DEVELOPING THE NEW INTERNATIONAL GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY?

1. When developing the new international gender equality strategy, it is important that the Government fully acknowledges that **gender and women are not synonymous**, that people of diverse gender identities are especially vulnerable to gendered violence and discrimination, and that successful efforts to achieve gender equality requires the active contribution of all genders, including men and boys.
2. It is also important to articulate awareness of the fact that **women are not a homogenous whole**. In acknowledging the diversity of women's voices, it is critical that women, young women, girls and people of diverse gender identities and sexual orientation who may be especially disadvantaged or vulnerable to violence and discrimination are acknowledged and heard.
3. Efforts to advance **an inclusive, localised approach** to achieving gender equality will achieve greater success. Accommodating and addressing the diversity of voices and experiences of different genders to advance gender equality can also be facilitated by undertaking intersectional analyses to inform programmes, policies and practices. Such intersectional analyses should be cognisant of age, ethnicity, disability, race, caste, class, sexual orientation and diverse genders.
4. Efforts to enhance **cross-government communication and coherence of efforts** can also help consolidate gains and ensure consistency of efforts. It can also help demonstrate full and genuine

cross-government commitment to the principle of gender equality. The gender equality strategy must acknowledge the importance of the Government setting a strong, positive example if the strategy is to have credibility and impact.

5. The gender equality strategy should consistently apply to **all areas of Australia's international policy**, particularly areas of national security, trade strategy and areas where gender issues and gender equality principles have been traditionally neglected or erroneously seen as 'irrelevant'.
6. The gender equality strategy should **seamlessly connect domestic and international policies**, acknowledging that while Australia still has work to do in terms of achieving gender equality, it remains committed to the work at home and abroad.

Further information

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